



1st March 2021

Dear resident,

Land South of the Swan 20/00508/AS

We apologise that this is a long letter. But we believe it is important to the future of Charing and we need your help. Please do read it.

As you may well have seen new plans have been submitted regarding the “reserved matters” planning application for Land South of the Swan [Ashford Borough Council | Planning Applications](#). Sadly, little notice has been taken of many of the comments made earlier and there are a number of things wrong with the application that could be made better (see below). Our attempts to meet the developers have come to nothing.

It also seems that the planners at Ashford Borough Council have been, so far, largely deaf to our concerns. This is unacceptable - it is the residents of Charing, current and future, who will have to live with what is built, not Ashford planners. Ashford has imposed a large amount of new housing on Charing – the least they can do is listen to us and make the resulting estates as pleasant as possible.

The parish council would be grateful if as many residents as possible could post comments on the planning portal. If you have already posted comments and simply wish to say that your earlier concerns have not been addressed and therefore still stand, then please do so. You may wish to consider sending an email to our ward councillor, Gerry Clarkson (gerry.clarkson@ashford.gov.uk).

The posted deadline for comments is March 5th but we have requested an extension to March 12th.

What is wrong? It is important to note that we cannot now protest against the principle of building the new estate – that battle was lost when outline permission was granted in 2019. We can also acknowledge that it is a very difficult piece of land to develop and that the developers have made significant steps to address the problems of the wet nature of the ground. But the following issues remain:

1. Part of the footpath (AW35) that runs along the south edge of the site is too muddy to use for much of the year. But when surfaced and widened it will be part of our proposed “Greenway” (all-weather footpath and cycleway) between Charing and Charing heath. It would also provide a short route for most residents of the new estate to the station and the GP surgery encouraging walking rather than car journeys. The Greenway is supported by KCC and is a high priority item in ABC’s draft cycling strategy – not to mention the health and other benefits of encouraging walking and cycling and national policy. There will be money for KCC to do the stretches of the greenway either side of the section through the site. But apparently the middle stretch will be left as a muddy path. This is simply bonkers.

2. The future amenity of residents of both Poppyfields and the new estate requires a decent boundary with good planting and sufficient space to maintain the hedgerows, trees and stream and prevent pollution of the latter. Currently separation space is too limited particularly in the north east corner and there is inadequate planting proposed. In addition, the back gardens of many of the proposed houses that back onto Poppyfields will simply have a chain link fence meaning that people walking by on Poppyfields could see into back gardens where children might be playing. Kent Police in their comments have highlighted the need for appropriate boundary planting for security reasons.
3. The sewage from the estate will drain into a sewer that is already overloaded. Periodically foul water backs up into some houses and also into the GP surgery (see the comment from the surgery 17th June 2020). It is Southern Water's responsibility to deal with this but so far there are no published plans. We do not feel planning permission should be granted until there is a clear commitment from Southern Water to upgrade the sewer before additional houses are occupied. This is not a responsibility Ashford can abdicate.
4. Equally our understanding is that no company has yet been appointed, and agreed, to manage the fresh and foul water drains after completion. Given the experience of Poppyfields, where substantial and costly changes had to be made to the system after completion before any company agreed to adopt them, we think it is essential that the future "undertaker" is agreed beforehand and has approved the plans.
5. The proposed access to the site from the A20 is very close to that proposed for the development next door behind Charing Motors. This was recognised as a problem when the Planning Committee discussed the application and the need for a single access is implied in ABC's own policy for the land behind Charing Motors. It could be simply addressed by a link road between the two eventually enabling one access to be reserved for emergency uses. Original plans showed a link road which simply needed to be widened slightly but the latest plan has turned this into a cul de sac.
6. Only limited additional planting has been proposed along the northern boundary to protect views from the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This is contrary to ABC's own policy for the site.
7. No gate is marked on the plans to the small access lane between Pleasant Place and the Jasmine restaurant. Its lack would increase walking distance to shops and other village amenities for many residents making car use more likely.
8. There appear to be no plans for future management of the wooded area in the south east corner.

Thank you for reading to the end of this letter

Charing Parish Council

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